

# COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.  
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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## A New Era: Part 2

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The Cosmopolitan Hotel or "Seely House," as locals called it, opened in November 1869. "The new hotel," according to the San Diego Union, "is truly an elegant building. Its broad verandas above and below extending on three sides of the whole building give the place a comfortable southern air."

A stage driver since the age of 17, Seeley built the hotel to provide overnight accommodations for passengers taking his stage to and from Los Angeles. Prior to converting the Bandini home into a hotel, his stage line had operated out of the Franklin House across the plaza.

The hotel was part of a large-scale operation as Seeley purchased adjacent lots and built a large two-story, gable-ended barn, corrals, livery stable, windmill and cistern over the

next two years. By 1873-1874, he owned five wagons and other vehicles valued at \$1,000, 16 horses and half-breeds at \$800, and harnesses, ropes, and bridles at \$100 according to the tax assessment rolls.

Seeley promoted the Cosmopolitan as a "first-class hotel." Advertisements in the San Diego Union stated that the "large and commodious hotel" featured "large, well ventilated, and finely furnished" rooms and a well-stocked table and bar boasting "the choicest wines, liquors and cigars."

The bar sold imported Havana cigars for 20 and 25 cents each, fresh lager beer by the glass, bottle or gallon, and a special, highly popular drink called "Uncle Toby" for a nickel. Ice was always on hand.

The rooms were decorated with colored pattern wallpaper, most likely hung over stretched muslin. They were small, without indoor plumbing fixtures or bathrooms, but well suited for Seeley's passengers, many of whom were single or unattached men. It

also catered to local visitors traveling by stage and extended family members from outlying areas with business and personal ties to Old Town.

Contrary to the owner's promotional claim, the hotel was not really "first-class." It did not have gas lighting or running water, a billiard room, or suites like the Horton House and other downtown upscale establishments. But like many frontier institutions, it provided a multiplicity of services, including a post and telegraph office, a barbershop operated by a "gentleman of color," and a town social center along with providing hotel accommodations and stage transportation.

The hotel also featured a "spacious sitting room," which occupied Bandini's former *sala* or parlor room. A large room with a fireplace that still exists and a tongue-and-groove Douglas fir floor recently uncovered by State Parks staff, it was the scene of raffles, family reunions, evening dances, Christmas parties, and wedding receptions.

